

Librarians as Ambassadors for EPA Information

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The EPA's website is voluminous and elaborate. Containing more than 300 areas and over one million pages of text and files, it serves audiences ranging from elementary school children to Ph.D. environmental researchers. Because of its breadth, EPA struggles, as do many large organizations, to reach multiple diverse audiences. With limited resources, reaching any significant portion of the public remains a difficult task for the Agency. And the size, extent, and nature of some of its material can prove daunting to those unfamiliar with it. The *Web Ambassadors* project attempts to mitigate these issues by familiarizing strategic information intermediaries with EPA's web resources and offering incentives for them to teach their constituents about EPA's resources and how to access and use them.

EPA chose librarians as the first group to participate in this *Web Ambassadors* project. They are a clearly defined set of critical information intermediaries for the public. To that end, this project does not address a single environmental issue; rather, it provides guidance on how to access information on a variety of environmental topics. Similarly, rather than focusing on a particular area of Agency science, a spectrum of EPA science is made more available through this project.

The *Web Ambassadors* project uses a basic information diffusion model which focuses on agents—information intermediaries—in terms of their locations, readiness to adopt, ability to benefit, and the nature of their message passing. Focusing on those variables, we developed this train-the-trainer effort to provide them tools to teach their constituents about the environmental information, tools, and resources available on EPA's website. Because of the train-the-trainer aspect, the project has a multiplier effect that increases the total number of people reached per workshop.

EPA partners with library associations around the country to provide this training. The project includes (1) a hands-on training session; (2) online training sessions; (3) a booklet outlining important aspects of the EPA website relevant for librarians and their patrons; and (4) a "quick reference" poster for librarians highlighting key content and navigational features on the EPA site. All materials were beta tested by groups of librarians and have been enthusiastically received. They are available for viewing at <http://www.epa.gov/ambassadors>.